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General debate on national experience in population matters: new trends in migration — demographic aspects

Statement submitted by Stichting Rutgers WPF, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Stichting Rutgers WPF welcomes the theme of the forty-sixth session of the Commission on Population and Development, "New trends in migration: demographic aspects".

There are more than 213 million international migrants in the world, half of whom are women. Many of the world's migrants are below the age of 30 (in the global South, the median age of migrants is only 26.3 years) and 34 million migrants are under the age of 20. This is a demographic group that cannot be ignored.

We would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of sexual and reproductive rights and health in relation to migration for the key demographic group of youth. It is vital that this issue be addressed in decision-making processes. The facts below indicate that this matter should be treated urgently:

- According to the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, many Governments require women migrant workers to undergo pregnancy and HIV testing, either before departure or after arrival, on a yearly basis or upon the renewal of a contract (see www.arrow.org.my).
- Many young migrants who get pregnant or acquire a sexually transmitted infection, such as HIV, face imprisonment or deportation (see www.arrow.org.my).
- In many countries, immigrants are prohibited from getting married or having children, and access to safe abortions and contraceptives is very limited (www.arrow.org.my).
- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights notes that there is an increasing tendency to criminalize migration-related offences and that migrants are often detained as a routine procedure; overcrowded migrant detention centres often provide poor sanitation and health-care services.
- Migration policies and the lack of access to the labour market and public services often result in discrimination and anti-migration sentiment, which in turn raise obstacles for the empowerment of young migrants, the fulfilment of their rights and their ability to access comprehensive and good quality sexual and reproductive health services and information.

More than half of the world's population is under 24 years of age. Young people are more than a demographic category: they are the future. Therefore, we urge that the following actions be taken to protect and empower young migrants.

- Governments of countries of origin and destination must ensure access to comprehensive and good quality sexual and reproductive health services and information, including comprehensive sexuality education throughout the migration cycle, especially for young people. Governments must provide access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, including for safe abortions, regardless of migrant status. Health-care providers should be youth friendly, give non-judgemental care and respect diversity, privacy and confidentiality. Governments should provide comprehensive sexuality education to young migrants to enable them to enjoy their right to have control

over and to decide on matters related to their sexuality, including their sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

- There is a need to increase and improve the collection and generation of data on sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially with regard to young women and girl migrants. Governments should acknowledge and respect the diversity of young people by conducting research, collecting disaggregated data by age, gender and other relevant criteria, and developing programmes that take these criteria into account.

- Governments should address the vulnerability of migrants to discrimination, sexual and gender-based violence. Discrimination against young people, and in particular young women and girls, hinders their integration into society. Eliminating discriminatory policies will enable migrants to obtain fair and equal rights, which should include access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. Doing so will also significantly increase the future prospects of young international migrants. Women and girls constitute 48 per cent of all migrants. Female migrants are predominantly employed in gender-segregated, low-paid and unregulated professions. They are particularly vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking in persons, sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation. Governments should develop specific policies and programmes to combat and address these threats, especially for women and girls.

- In terms of meaningful youth participation, Governments should empower young people, especially young migrants, to play a central role in the design and implementation of immigration and integration policies and programmes at the regional, national and international levels, and invest in young people through mentoring programmes, capacity-building initiatives and youth-adult partnerships based on equality.

- With regard to the International Conference on Population and Development, Governments should support the commitment made at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly to further the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 and participate in a special session at the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly and recommit to those goals and objectives at the highest political level.

There is still a lot of work to be done to implement the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action. The same is true of other international commitments, including the Millennium Development Goals, especially Goals 5 and 6. Only an approach that incorporates all the above-mentioned points of action will succeed in giving us, the youth of the world, the safe and happy future we deserve.